

HR109

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Testimony for EDN on Mar 20, 2015 14:00PM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
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re: Friday, March 20, 2015 EDN-HED Hearing (2 pm)

Testimony on: **HR109** and **HCR173** - REQUESTING THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN TO ADDRESS CHRONIC STUDENT ABSENTEEISM.

Aloha EDN and HED Members,

I **support** HR109 and HCR173, and ask that the EDN pass this bill and resolution with the following amendment underlined and in red to the resolution that appears in both bills as follows:

“...BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Education and the Board of Education are requested to implement standards requiring direct communication from a school administrator or administrative support staff member of any absences or tardiness to a student's guardians within a reasonable timeframe...”

Rationale for Requested Amendment:

Teachers should not be required to perform the tasks associated with getting chronic absenteeism under control, but they are. This is a problem that the DOE and BOE are not going to correct without legislative mandate. I ask the legislature to make it clear that handling chronic absenteeism is an administrative task not to be passed onto our highly-qualified, hard-working teachers.

Teachers should focus on tasks *directly* related to teaching. Performing the administrative tasks associated with chronic absenteeism, e.g. contacting parents, filing forms, conducting parent interviews, etc., should be done school administrators with assistance from administrative support staff. Forcing teachers to perform these tasks is absurd.

In the Big Island school where I taught, teachers were expected to perform these duties. This is an outrageous waste of teacher time and expertise. It's also terribly inefficient to train teachers to do these administrative tasks. Only a few staff members at each school need to be trained and proficient at performing these responsibilities, and year after year, families with chronic absenteeism will be dealing with the same school administrator – not a different teacher starting from scratch each year.

We need this amendment so that our teachers are free to focus on teaching, and the responsibility for chronic absenteeism is clearly defined as being within the domain of school administrators' duties.

Teachers should be teaching. Administrators should be handling the tasks associated with chronic absenteeism. This shouldn't have to be spelled out in the law, but in Hawai'i, it does because the DOE and BOE are not going to fix the problem. Therefore, we need the legislature to do something about it.

Mahalo,

Vanessa Ott